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Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council authorizes establishment of UNAVEM III, to help restore peace and national reconciliation in Angola; Mission will deploy up to 7,000 military personnel; initial mandate until 8 August.

+ Secretary-General recommends increase in authorized strength of UNAMIR's civilian police component from 90 to 120 observers; says strong foundation established for further progress in Rwanda.

+ Secretary-General appoints Mr. Berhanu Dinka (Ethiopia) as Special Envoy for Sierra Leone for an initial period of three months; to work with parties towards a negotiated settlement of three-year conflict.

+ Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Army and Bosnian Croats take part in helicopter reconnaisance of Mount Igman DMZ; all sign moratorium that zone is free troops; humanitarian situation in Bihac causing increased concern.

+ Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi returns to Haiti today following positive meeting with troop contributors focusing on phasing in of UNMIH.

+ Member States owe United Nations almost $3.6 billion as of 31 January; $1.4 billion owed to regular budget and $2.2 billion to peace-keeping.

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The Security Council today authorized the establishment of a new operation, the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III), to help the Angolan Government and the National Union for the Total Indepedence of Angola (UNITA) restore peace and achieve national reconciliation in their country. The Council had before it the Secretary-General's report dated of 1 February. In unanimously adopting resolution 976 (1995), the Council stated the Mission will assist in the peace process on the basis of the "Acordos de Paz" of 31 May 1994, the Lusaka Protocol and relevant Council resolutions. With an initial mandate until 8 August, it will deploy a maximum of 7,000

military personnel, in addition to 350 military observers and 260 police observers, and will also have an appropriate number of international and local staff.

The Council authorized the immediate deployment of the planning and support needed to prepare for the deployment of the peace-keeping forces, provided the Secretary-General was satisfied the cease-fire and effective monitoring mechanisms were in place, and the parties were allowing the free and safe flow of humanitarian assistance throughout the country. The Council also authorized the subsequent deployment of elements needed to set up operational quartering areas for UNITA forces.

The infantry units will be deployed when the Secretary-General informs the Council that certain conditions have been met, including the effective cessation of hostilities, the provision of relevant military data and the designation of all quartering areas. The Council asked the Secretary-General to report monthly on progress made in deploying UNAVEM III and the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol .

The Council said it will conclude UNAVEM III's mission when the Lusaka Protocol's objectives are achieved with a completion date expected by February 1997. It called on the Government and UNITA to stop acquiring arms and war material during UNAVEM III's presence and to devote their resources to humanitarian and social needs. The Council also called on the Angolan Government to conclude an agreement with the United Nations on the Status of Forces no later than 20 March.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the authorized strength of the civilian police component of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) be raised from 90 to 120 observers. In a report to the Security Council dated 6 February, the Secretary-General said that although much remained to be done in Rwanda, a strong foundation had been established for further progress. As the country advanced on the road to recovery and reconstruction, it was essential that the Government cooperate closely with UNAMIR and ensure that its personnel, officials of the International Tribunal and human rights officers had unimpeded access to all areasof Rwanda.

Reiterating his call for the Government to ensure that Rwandese who did not participate in the genocide were given the opportunity to play a role in national reconciliation, the Secretary-General said it would be regrettable if the achievements reached so far were jeopardized because some sections of the population felt excluded. He welcomed the efforts of regional States and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to contribute to a lasting solution to the problems of Rwanda, and noted the effort of his Special Humanitarian Envoy to coordinate United Nations response to the crisis in Rwanda.

The Secretary-General said the OAU and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) would convene a subregional conference in

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Bujumbura, Burundi this month to consider assistance to refugees, displaced persons and returnees in the Great Lakes areas. He hoped it would lay the groundwork for a later, broader conference which would identify long term solutions to ensure peace, security and sustainable development in the subregion.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appointed Mr. Berhanu Dinka (Ethiopia) as his Special Envoy for Sierra Leone for an initial period of three months. In a letter to the Security Council dated 7 February, the Secretary-General said the Sierra Leone Head of State had asked the United Nations to facilitate negotiations between his Government and forces in the country known as the Revolutionary United Front. Mr. Dinka will work with the parties concerned towards a negotiated settlement of the three-year conflict.

The Secretary-General said an exploratory mission he sent to Sierra Leone in mid December noted the serious deterioration of the situation there. About 10 percent of the population are refugees in neighbouring countries and at least 30 percent are internally displaced. Vital infrastructure has been destroyed and three quarters of the national budget is spent on defence. If the conflict continues, it will further complicate the problem of bringing peace to Liberia and could have a destablizing effect on the region.

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In the former Yugoslavia, representatives of Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Army and Bosnian Croats all took part in a helicopter reconnaisance of the Mount Igman DMZ yesterday, according to a United Nations spokesman. The helicopter flight was organized by the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) to establish whether or not the Bosnian Army had left the demilitarized zone. After the flight, all sides signed a moratorium that the zone was free of troops.

In other developments, traffic at the Sarajevo airport crossing continued to be very heavy the spokeman said. Yesterday, 410 vehicles and 2, 850 people crossed the routes which are open for eight hours daily. The routes are opened for 4 hours in the morning and 4 hours in the evening - 2 hours for Government crossings and 2 hours for Bosnian Serb crossings. Security along the routes is provided by UNPROFOR and although the two sides are allowed to have 3 monitors each along the routes, they have no authority to stop anyone or check any vehicle.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the military situation was stable except for the Bihac region, where shelling continued, the spokesman continued. The humanitarian situation, particularly the food supply, was causing a lot of concern. Efforts were being made to try and get United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) food convoys into Bihac and alternative routes into the area were being explored.

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Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi returned to Haiti today following a very good meeting with troop contributors, according to a United Nations spokesman. The discussions which were also attended by the Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), Major-General Joseph Kinzer focused on the phasing in of UNMIH.

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As of 31 January, Member States owed the United Nations almost $3.6 billion, according to the latest update on the Organization's financial situation. Of that amount, $1.4 billion was for assessments for the regular budget and $2.2 billion was for peace-keeping operations.

The United States - the biggest debtor -- owed a total of $1 billion for both peace-keeping and to the regular budget. The Russian Federation owed the United Nations a total of $649 million.

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